

THE PLEIADES AND ORION

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A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Can you bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?”
Job 38:31.*

MOST of you know that singularly beautiful cluster of stars called the Pleiades—very small, but intensely *bright*. These are most conspicuous about the time of spring, and therefore, in poetry, the vernal influences which quicken the earth and clothe it with the green grass, and the many-colored flowers, are connected with the Pleiades. By the sweet influences of the Pleiades we understand, then, in plain language, those benign influences which produce the spring and the summer; these, it is said, no man can restrain. Orion, a very conspicuous constellation with its glittering belt, is best seen towards the close of *autumn*, just before the coming in of the winter. It is a southern and wintry sign, and therefore, poetically, the winter is traced to the bands of Orion, and we are told in the text, literally, that no man is able to loosen the bonds of frost, or check the incoming of the cold. In other words, the whole verse asserts that *none* can stop the revolutions of the seasons. When *God* ordains the spring, the shining months come laughing on; and when again He calls for winter, snow and ice must rule the dreary hour. The farmer is entirely dependent upon the God of heaven; he may plow with industry, and cast in the good seed with hope, but unless the sweet influences of heaven shall be given, he can reap no harvest. If the drought is long and severe, he cannot cause the clouds to drench the thirsty furrows, or, if the rain descends in torrents, drowning the pastures, he cannot seal up the bottles of heaven; he is absolutely dependent upon God, who governs all things according to His will; and we, who know so little of agricultural operations, being so far removed from the country which *God* has made, and living in the town which *man* has made, we also are as much dependent as any, for even the king is nourished by the fruit of the field; and follow what merchandise we will, ultimately it is still from the fields that our nourishment must come. All of us, then, and not us alone, but all the beasts and birds, and all the creatures, are entirely and absolutely dependent upon God, and unless He helps them, they cannot help themselves. This is the simple teaching of the verse, but it was doubtless used to teach Job that as he could not alter the ordinances of heaven, so neither could he change the purposes of God in the events of providence. You cannot hasten the spring nor postpone the winter, neither can you prevent those calamities which plunge nations in distress, nor prohibit those mercies which lift up tribes into prosperity. Evil comes to the sons of men by God's purpose, and good comes also. Neither is it in your power, O son of man, with all your discretion and skill, with all your economy and industry, to avert the *evil* which God appoints. The scythe of the dread mower cannot be arrested by wisdom—the inevitable hour comes to all. Need and sickness, and bereavement invade us at the Lord's bidding, and although we may greatly mitigate their rigor, yet we cannot avert them, for the ordinances of God must surely come to pass. Whatever is written in the folded book of the divine decree must, in due season, be fulfilled in the history of man; if you cannot alter, then bow yourself and submit; if you cannot change the purpose, then yield to it and ask to have it sanctified to you. O Job, if your cattle must be taken away, if your children must die, if sore boils must break out upon your body, if you must sit upon the dunghill, if you have no power to alter a single circumstance, then accept the affliction at the hand of the infinite One! Humbly kiss the hand that smites, and say, “It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him.” The doctrine of a divine providence is calculated to create in the minds of the thoughtful and believing, the

spirit of resignation. They might perhaps rebel and struggle, if this were of some use, but since it would be utterly useless, since the great wheels of providence proceed in their perpetual revolutions, not pausing for our tears, nor hastening for our groans, then it is best for us to admire it as it revolves, to believe that it is producing good, and to submit ourselves to whatever the Lord appoints.

However, I do not intend using the text in that sense this morning, but as we are told that no man can restrain the benign influences of the Pleiades, so, in the first place, *men cannot utterly prevent the working of the gracious Spirit*; and as men, in the second place, cannot loose the bands of Orion, so men, of themselves, *are not able to overcome those wintry powers which sometimes seize upon the human heart*. We will speak of these two things, and then, in the third place, *the lessons from them*.

I. WHO SHALL BIND THE SWEET INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Holy Spirit does not always operate in the same degree of power, but when His time, His *set* time, to favor Zion is come, then, blessed be God, He is like the dew upon the grass that waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men. It is not in human or in diabolical power to restrain the influences of the Holy One of Israel when He deigns to visit His church. Many attempts have been made against the church of God, but they have all proven failures because the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit has frustrated all the purposes of the Lord's enemies. The church of God, especially in her early days, has been assailed by the envenomed tongue of *slander*. All over the Roman Empire it was reported that Christians were men of the most brutalized habits. I dare not mention, for the cheek of modesty would be crimsoned, what the charges were brought against Christians of crimes perpetrated in their assemblies. Suffice it to say that among the rest, as they met together to break bread, and drink wine in memory of their Lord, it was said they were accustomed to eat the flesh of a man, and that they passed round from hand to hand and drank together out of a cup of warm human blood. Of course, the populace, believing these horrible stories were violently opposed to the Christian faith. And how did the Christian faith overcome the popular opposition stimulated by such calumny as this? Simply by the power of the Holy Spirit! The sweet influences of the Holy Spirit which descended upon the disciples at Pentecost remained with them, so that when they preached, they preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; when in their private assemblies they spoke of Jesus, they spoke in the power with which they had been endowed at Jerusalem, and calumny was of no more avail than chaff contending with the whirlwind, or stubble warring against the fire. In fact, these very calumnies brought men out of curiosity to behold these atrocious sinners in their orgies of vice, and coming, they listened to the gracious words which proceeded out of their mouths, and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, they believed and became Christians too!

Beloved, this stands good today! Many a Christian has to endure slander, and of the most cruel kind too. To a sensitive heart, perhaps, slander is a more severe trial than even the whip or the rack. And yet, glory be to God, if our names are cast out as evil, they cannot deprive us of the comfort of the Holy One of Israel! Often, when we are worst spoken of by the world, we are best beloved of our God. The Lord has a way of taking up His people when they are despised and rejected of men, and manifesting His love to them after an unusual sort, so that if the cup might have been dashed with bitters, God pours in so much of the honey of His own precious love, that the bitter is forgotten, and the calumny is swallowed up in the communion. Happy are you, beloved, when they say all manner of evil against you for Christ's name's sake, for you can reply to your accusers, "Can you bind up the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit? Can you stop from my soul the divine and overflowing consolations which proceed from the Pleiades of promise when they shine full upon my soul?"

If calumny does not do, the world has always been ready with coarser weapons—she resorts to *open persecution*. But, beloved, all the persecutions which have ever assaulted the church have never been able to stop the sweet influence of the Pleiades—I mean to quench the work of the *Spirit*, and deprive the church of God of her true comfort! When it has been her springtime, all the blood which could be shed could not thrust her back again into her dreary winter. Her flowers bloomed, her buds began to shoot forth, and her fruits adorned her branches to the glory of our God. Behold Paul and Silas in the

dungeon of Philippi! Their persecutors have scourged them, they have laid them in the stocks, they have thrust them into the noisome filth of the innermost prison—but the sweet influences of the Pleiades are felt, and they begin to sing in the dead of night until the prisoners hear them. Behold the influence of these same Pleiades in every place where the apostles went! They were followed by their Jewish persecutors, and they were molested by the Gentile mobs—but their preaching drew to the cross of Christ a company whose hearts the Lord had touched, and He added unto the church, daily, of such as should be saved! After the apostolic days, often in the midst of the amphitheater, when the nobles and the matrons of Rome, and the Plebs, in all their ranks were gathered together, and a few defenseless men and women were given up to bears and wolves and lions in the midst of the arena, how the sweet influence of the Pleiades fell on them! How they sung their psalms as the lions rushed from their dens, or folded their arms in peace, praising the Lord that He thought them worthy to be partakers of His sufferings! So was it on the snowy Alps! So was it in the valleys of Piedmont! So was it among the suffering Huguenots of France! So was it among our martyred fathers! Smithfield felt the influence of the Pleiades full often when her flames became as chariots in which the saints mounted to their thrones! In the glens of Scotland, among her lone hills and shaggy woods, when such men as Cargill and Cameron opened the Bible and read the text by a flash of lightning, and then preached of the royalties of King Jesus—in those covenanting days the sweet influence of the Pleiades were perhaps more felt than in these softer hours when men learn to sleep under the ministry of the truth—and too many of them are ready to cancel their principles, and give up their hopes if but a little pain should cross their path. Persecution, what have you done? March before us, you cruel ranks of persecutors, each with the hell-brand on your brow; you sons of Cain, you brethren of Korah, you disciples of Balaam—you have *never* been able to impede the onward march of the church of God—no, not so much as for a single hour! Vain were your arts and villainies, for God from heaven fought against you!

Nor, dear brothers and sisters have even the crafty *heresies* which at different times have crept into the church of God been able to bind the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit? Oftentimes, the very springtime of the church has come, when to all outward appearance it appeared that evil had altogether triumphed. When Popery's power had become consolidated and universal, it was then that Savonarola, Jerome of Prague, and John Huss were raised up together with our own John Wickliffe, to shake the foundations of the throne of Antichrist! At the darkest hour of the world's history the light of God began to shine! These men, when they had either burnt them alive, or consumed their corpses, these men it was supposed, would be forgotten, and their influence would perish from off the face of the earth; for, were not all the doctors on the side of Rome? Were not all the school-men zealous to maintain her dogmas? What were these few men, that they should be able to stand against the old, the venerable, the wealthy? But, brothers and sisters, the old error had to give way, and the light of the gospel shone forth, and a new spring life came to the world, and the time of the singing of birds, and the blooming of the flowers was come, and men called it the Reformation! Rest assured it will be so today; the craft of Satan, and the wickedness of man have invented forms of mischief so insinuating, that they threaten speedily to envelop our land; we have among us a form of Popery in which Romanism is divested of its grosser idolatries, clothed with gorgeous vestments, garnished with attractive pomp, and upheld by the most earnest, and to all appearances, the most pious of men. Will this prevail? Will this destroy the gospel by whose dew the nation has so long been watered? We have among us at the same hour a rationalism, sufficiently cautious not to deny too much, stealthily advancing to its ultimate results, but lingering wisely by the way to talk of liberality, and breadth of thought. This is fascinating to the last degree to many minds, and is subduing to itself hundreds of the more thoughtful youths of this country. Between these two millstones will not Christ's kingdom be crushed? May we not fear that rationalism and ceremonialism will be like the two hands of Samson, to remove the pillars whereon our house does lean? Ah, not so! If the Holy Spirit does but descend upon the *living* churches of God, and put power into the preaching of the truth, we may safely laugh all these to scorn, and say to the greatest of them, "Can you stand for a single second against the power of the adorable Spirit who is the guardian of the truth of

God, the life of the church, the defender of the faith, the vanquisher of errors, the defier of hell, the establisher of truth's empire, and the destroyer of the throne of lies?"

Advancing step by step, I would remind you that there is a great opposition in man himself to the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit. When the time comes for any one man to be saved, his *natural enmity* is sure to be on the alert against the divine power and Satan is certain also to strengthen him lest he should lose his victim. Now, I glorify God in this that you, sinner, though you may resist and grieve the Spirit for a while, yet if He comes to you with omnipotent power effectually to save, you *must* yield, for you, even you, with all your enmity, cannot bind the sweet influences of the Spirit of eternal Life. It is with many men as I have sometimes seen with a village brook—it has been dammed up for some reason, and the water has become a pool. A heavy shower has by-and-by fallen upon the hills, and the full stream has leaped downward. There stands the dam for a little while, but it trembles as the stream swells; perhaps the villagers strengthen it, but if the rain continues to fall, the stream increases in volume, and at last, with one noble outburst, down leaps the torrent, and the dam is swept away like a bowing wall. So with our evil nature—when the Holy Spirit comes, with greater and greater power, descending from the hills of God's eternal purposes, He at last sweeps away every remnant of opposition, and on He sweeps in the greatness of His strength. "You deny, then," asks one, "the free will of man?" Who says that? I never denied it! On the contrary, I *insist* upon it more than most men. There is no opposition between the doctrine of irresistible grace and the fact of the free agency of man. "How," you ask, "if man is thus irresistibly carried as by storm, how can he be free?" Think, man, and answer for yourself! Were you never overcome in an argument? Did you never resist an argument for a time, till at last another reason was given, and then another, and you could not but yield to the overwhelming arguments? Did you then prove that you had no reason of your own? No, it proved you *had* a reason, and therefore could be mastered by arguments fitted to your reason. If you had been bereft of reason—an idiot—nobody could have spoken of an irresistible argument as far as you were concerned, but your powers of understanding enabled you to be overcome by legitimate force. So with the will—we do not dream, as some falsely imagine, that physical force is used by the Lord with men's moral natures, but we teach that there are appeals and persuasions, arguments and forces which are applicable to the will which, without violating its freedom even in the smallest degree, yet overwhelm it and subdue it to the right and the true, so that the man, with full consent, yields up himself to the full power of divine love. Do not the hymns of Mr. Wesley often express our meaning when he uses such words as overcoming and forcing? As in the verse—

*"Save the vilest of the race,
Force me to be saved by grace"?*

Such expressions mean just what *we* mean and no more. We do not mean the violation of the *will*, but we do mean this, that where the Holy Spirit comes, though the man's will may have been obstinate enough before, when He exerts His wondrous influences, He makes the will to yield itself at once. The man is made willing in the day of God's power—the sweet influences of the Pleiades are not bound even by human rebellion!

It is cause for thankfulness also that no man can bind the sweet influence completely after he has been saved. If your experience is at all like mine, you sometimes get into a very horrible state of mind; you may feel as if you had no spiritual life at all; cannot pray—or, if you pray, you do not enjoy it; go up to the house of God, and get no comfort; turn to the Bible, and behold no gleams of light. You get wretched, and you sing with Dr. Watts—

*"Dear Lord, and shall we always live
At this poor dying rate?"*

Well, all of a sudden, you have such a visitation; you have not had such a time for months. It may be under a sermon, or, perhaps, at the Lord's Table or even in the midst of your business, before you are aware, your soul is made like the chariots of Amminadab; you feel so rejoicing—it is not bodily excitement, it is spiritual life, filled with vigor! Now you can pray; now you can pour out your soul in

tears; now you feel most happy and blessed; you wonder how you could have been like a desert before, for you blossom so much like a garden now. Ah, it is this—the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit could not be bound even by your darkness and your death! God determined to visit you, and coming to you, He overcame every obstacle, and made your soul to rejoice with unspeakable joy!

Beloved, it is just so with *a church*. I am sure this church was in about as bad a plight as we could well suppose, for the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit to work in it; I was a scattered flock, and divided and brought low; yet, though there were a thousand discouragements, no sooner did the Holy Spirit visit this church, than see how it began to multiply and rejoice! During these 14 years the same influences have blessed us, obstacles have been overcome, difficulties have been swept away, and none have been able to keep from us the reviving influences of the Holy Spirit.

You have now before you the thought of the freeness of the Spirit of God, who, like wind, blows as He wishes, and is not bound by human might. Let me only add that although no man can by his own power bind or effectually and finally restrain the power of the Spirit of God, yet the Lord may withdraw His Spirit either from a church or from an individual for a season, and so cause sore distress, and prove that nothing is good or strong without Him. Be aware, therefore, of the Holy Spirit. O you who know His power, trifle not with any of His divine warnings! Be jealous lest you grieve Him; follow His faintest monitions, and in all things do Him honor as your friend and guide. He may depart from the sinner who is not obedient to Him; He may leave altogether, and then such a soul is given up. From the saint also He may for a time be gone, till the good man repents and humbles himself, and then He will return, like a dove, with all His peaceful powers, to abide with Him evermore!

II. Now we shall turn to the second half of the text. There is a winter time both with churches and with individuals when Orion is in the ascendant, and then, though we could well wish to do so, WE ARE NOT ABLE TO LOOSEN THE BONDS OF THE FROST.

This is sadly true in individual cases. My dear brothers and sisters, I suppose in your endeavors to do good you have met with *persons in despair*. There are none who more thoroughly baffle all the arts of the human comforter than these. You bring them the gospel, and they see it, but refuse it; if they cannot help it, they will sometimes get a little light, but only let them have time enough, and they will shut their eyes and get into the dark again. They bring objections, and you answer them so conclusively, that you could almost laugh at them, but they only renounce one set of fears to raise another; you hunt them out of one hole, and you close it so that they never can get into it again, but alas, they make another! You drive them forth again but they find another retreat. They are most ingenious in inventing reasons for misery; they are diligent in the business of tormenting themselves; they are good people, they really have the fear of God. They are desirous of eternal Life—they have it even, and yet for all this, they are involved in a net in which the more they struggle, the more they are entangled. They are like men in the mud of the river Nile, who sinking in it, splash and plunge only to sink deeper every time. Have you not felt altogether confused in dealing with them? Have you not come out of the house and said, “I thought I could comfort people; I had some sort of conceit that I could have brought forward precious promises which might have cheered the hopeless, but I am altogether beaten; I can do nothing.” Now you may quote the language of the psalm we sang this morning—

*“When he shuts up in long despair,
Who can remove the heavy bar?”*

Such cases are not at all uncommon. What a happy day it is when God, having proved to us that we cannot loose the bands of Orion, loosens them Himself, and says to the captives, “Go free.” These make the best of Christians, when they obtain liberty; they become among the fairest of the divine family when they anoint their faces with the oil of joy. The terrible experience they have had helps them to sympathize with others, and instructs them in the devices of Satan, so that they can console others.

If it sometimes becomes a puzzle how to cheer others, I am sure it is so with *yourself*. Whenever I get under the bands of Orion, I find I cannot loosen them from my own hands. There are some very

happy, cheerful spirits who appear to have no winter, but the most of us occasionally fall into doubts and fears, and spiritual decays, when our liveliness and joy are at a low ebb—

*“If anything is felt, ‘tis only pain
To find I cannot feel.”*

We are, in the words of the text, bound with the bands of Orion, frost-bound, ice-bound. The soul which once ran warbling on like a clear stream is cold, and hard as a stone; its prayers are like icicles, its emotions like blocks of ice. Then, brothers and sisters, you may try and make the effort, as you ought to do, to loosen yourself from these bands, but you are powerless! Then is that text, “Without Me you can do nothing,” learned *experimentally*! Oh, then we feel that we are less than nothing and vanity, while merciless Orion hangs fetters on our soul, and hunts our joys to death. Blessed be God, the warmth of love returns before long, and the Pleiades shine again, and then we, “Rejoice with unspeakable joy, and full of glory.”

Now, beloved, this same truth is carried out in our works of faith in connection with *each soul*. You are going into your classes this afternoon, and I would be far from dispiriting you, but I would have you remember that if you attempt to convert a soul *yourself*, you had better first answer the question of our text, “Can you loose the bands of Orion?” It would be easier for you to turn winter into summer, than to turn a child of wrath into an heir of divine grace! You have a task before you which is utterly impossible to human strength. Conversion is no more in your power than creation. Regeneration lies not with *you*, but men are begotten again by the great Father of Spirits unto a lively hope. Bow before the power of God, and feel at this moment your own utter powerlessness in the work to which He has called you. To turn an understanding from darkness to light, to make the stubborn will supple, to break the iron sinew of pride, and make the neck to bow with cheerful obedience—this belongs not unto you, but unto the eternal Spirit who is omnipotent in the world of mind! Think of this and go in *His* strength—not in your own.

Brothers and sisters if it is so with individuals, it is in proportion equally so with entire *congregations*. We have, under God, as His servants, to save a perishing world; we are sent out as laborers in Christ’s vineyard to be the means of reclaiming the wild wastes to the husbandry of Christ; and what a task is ours! How impossible! We had better first attempt to loosen the bands of Orion before we shall be able, unaided of God, to loosen the bands of wickedness, and say to the oppressed, “Go free.” The missionary enterprise, apart from *supernatural* influences, is the most insane that ever crossed the mind of man. Yes, I will venture to say that the work of preaching the gospel, even in Christian England, is of all attempts the most foolish, unless we believe in the celestial power which *alone* can make preaching to be of any use. Withdraw the Spirit—withdraw our belief in His power, and our teachings become the subjects of deserved ridicule. It is even so in our attempts to revive a *slumbering church*. I discern a sleeping church pretty readily. When I am preaching in any place, I can soon tell what kind of people I am preaching to by their looks. There is a fire that flashes where there is life; the truth of God draws forth a responsive glance—good men’s bosoms heave while Christ is preached! But in some places hearers are stolid, cold, dead; you might almost as well preach to the green hillocks that surround the church as preach to them; they stir not, they move not, neither can they *be* moved. Now, at such times it is very dispiriting unless one can fall back upon the *belief* that the Holy Spirit *can*, if He *wills*, on a sudden quicken the most dead of all professing churches, and make His people again to live, so that like the dry bones of Ezekiel’s vision, they shall stand upon their feet an exceedingly great army, ready to fight the battle of their Master! Can *you* loosen the bands of Orion? Christian, feel your powerlessness! Behold what must be done, and yet how you can do less than nothing in it!

III. Stand here, and hear the voice of God which now speaks to you; that voice I will try to expound in the third part of the subject which consists of THE LESSONS DRAWN FROM THIS GREAT TRUTH, that we can neither restrain nor yet command the influences of the Holy Spirit.

On the very surface lies the lesson of *humility*. I trust, brothers, I have no need to say this, for the doctrine before us must have already had an effect upon your minds—while you have been thinking of

the power of God, and of your own insignificance, you must have felt bowed down and humbled. It is always dangerous to be useful. It is to be desired above silver, and coveted above fine gold, and yet, when obtained, it has its measure of dangers, for Satan will whisper, even if natural pride does not, "What an excellent man you must be! What qualifications there must be in you! What glory God gets out of you!" "See," says the devil, "hundreds saved under you, and believers comforted under you." And then the foul thought, the wicked thought seeks to build its nest right under the eaves of God's own temple in the heart, "You are something after all." But, brothers, we need to be brought back to this—"You can do *nothing* out of Christ; you are, apart from Him, a withered bough to be gathered and cast into the fire." Yes, you preacher—powerful, useful, honored of God—nothing but a withered bough apart from Christ! Yes, you goodly woman, you godly, earnest man engaged in the Sunday school or in the Bible class—all speak well of you, and yet you are a cloud without rain, and a well without water, unless you have a vital union with Christ! As well might a child uproot an Alp, as you attempt to win a soul apart from Christ; as well an infant creep from the cradle, and pluck the sun from its place, and hurl the moon into the deep, as you be able to deliver a soul from going down into the pit of hell. Oh, this thought, brothers and sisters; I feel as if I should not speak of it, for it prostrates me before God, and makes me ask Him never to leave me to myself to think myself something, lest He be angry with me, and use me no more.

Should not the next thought which comes into the mind be that of *gratitude* and *adoration* to God? If we cannot command the Holy Spirit's power, yet *He* can. What if Orion's bands cannot be loosened by us—they can be loosened by Him! There is no despairing soul that cannot find comfort when He visits it. "Yes, He makes the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children." "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill, that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people." "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light: they who dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined." He opens the blind eyes, and brings "out the prisoners from the prison and them who sit in darkness out of the prison house." Glory be to His name! Where the human arm fails to work results, the divine arm, with ease, achieves its purpose. And with us here, within our hearts, these gardens so frostbitten can be visited by Him; and if the Well-Beloved comes, the summer comes with all its pleasant fruits. If Jesus will but walk into this garden, and open the doors of our hearts and enter in, then there will be a paradise where there was before a wilderness. Blessed be the Lord, we cannot have sunk so low but He can lift us up! We cannot be so barren and so comfortless but what He can make us fruitful and give us joy and peace again! There is no church which He cannot revive. Are you members of congregations which are slumbering? Do not despair. You will go home after the day's service, and say, "I wish I could do some good here, but I am only one." No, dear brother, *you* cannot loosen the bands of Orion, but God can! The great Head of His church can suddenly come into His temple, and fill it with His glory. He can rake together the almost expiring ashes, and kindle the fire anew, and bring the sacrifice, and make your church yet to be a temple to His praise. Glorify the name of God, the all-powerful One; never let despair cross your soul. While He lives who made heaven and earth; while He works, who bears up the pillars of the universe; while He loves, who once gave up His Son to redeem us—there can be no cause for trembling. Zion shall be comforted; her days of gladness shall dawn; her winter of sorrow shall flee away: God is on her side, and Orion relaxes his bonds.

There is another lesson, however, which I must not fail to bring before you in a word or two, namely this—behold the *path and walk of faith*! She cannot walk in human power. She has quick eyes, and she perceives mortal might to be a mere pretense, but she walks in the power of the unseen One. "Can you bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades?" Faith answers, "I can." If Joshua bound the sun—put chains upon the horns of the moon, faith feels that she can do the same. Can you loosen the bands of Orion? "Yes," says faith, "that I can." If Elijah, after three years of drought, prayed, and the heavens were covered with clouds, and there was a sound of abundance of rain, and he did this by the prayer of *faith*, even so can *we* do by the power of Him who lives and rules in the highest heavens. Faith has the art of

getting hold upon the arm of God, and then, though she cannot stir or move in her own strength, yet she moves the arm of God that moves everything! She touches the motor nerve of omnipotence, and *He* acts whose action is conquest, whose work never fails. O brothers and sisters, if we can *believe* and *pray*, all things will be possible to us, and we shall hold the Holy Spirit bound in this church to remain with us for many and many a year, for He will never depart while His people's cries, and tears, and joyful thanksgivings are like a golden chain to stop His blessed feet; He will be bound and held by us. We may do with Him as the spouse did with her beloved. "I found him," said she, "and I would not let him go." O beloved members of this church, make it a resolution that the Holy Spirit shall not go from us, that we will, with diligent service, and unceasing prayer, and constant gratitude, stay Him and compel Him, seeing the day is far spent, to abide with us! One of the best ways to retain the Holy Spirit is to use what powers we have. Look at our farmers, how busy they have been during the last two or three weeks while the sun was shining, to gather in their hay! We must use every gleam of heavenly sunshine for Jesus' sake! It does not always come, but when a church is favored with it, let it use it to the utmost of its power, for God will not continue to give while we do not appreciate and *prove* our appreciation by making the full use of it. Yes, prayer and faith can hold the Spirit.

Prayer and faith can also loose the bonds of Orion. We will have sinners saved, we will have churches revived, and we will have London yet warmed with the life of God. Not because *we* can do it, but because we will give Him no rest until He comes forth from His secret dwelling place, and makes the power and life of His truth to be known from the ends of the earth!

The drift of the sermon is to cut you off from *yourselves*, and throw you flat on your faces before God. Sinner, you cannot save yourself! You cannot bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades! You cannot take away from yourself those bands of Orion! But Jehovah can, and in simple faith in Him who offers His blood before the throne of God; come to your Father, and ask Him to do these things for you, and they shall be done, and you shall glorify His name. May the blessing of God descend upon these words, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Job 38:31

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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